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TALISMANS OF THE PAST AND PRESENT

By W. T. AND K. PAVITT

FROM the remotest ages as far back as records animate and inanimate go, mankind has ever striven to express in some tangible form forces and powers but vaguely felt whose full expression remains ever beyond the practical material in which humanity is manifesting. Amidst the upheavals of the changing ages the forces of Nature would take prominent place in primitive man's recognition; volcanic upheavals, convulsions caused by floods, the crushing and disintegration of the ice ages would all be apparent subconsciously for the most part and very little understood, but all helping to emphasize the constant and seemingly undeviating motions of the heavenly bodies in their diurnal relation to the earth. The rising and gradual passing of the sun across the heavens to his glorious setting at the close of day, would not fail to impress the first waking mind of man, as a fact fixed, regular and unalterable. Naturally, then, when trying to express something of the intangible forces and powers of which he was dimly conscious, he would take the sun as a symbol to embody the highest and strongest aspirations and desires he was capable of feeling; and there is little doubt that the first talisman made by primitive man took the form of this symbol, rudely scratched on bone or metal, or even painted on his body to attract the benefits and good fortune it represented to him.

The most unique and, probably, the oldest symbol of the Sun is the Swastika, which is familiar to all and was used by every known civilization to attract the good or well-being, which its name accord-

ing to its Sanskrit meaning promises its wearers. It is interesting to note in connection with this, that it is used as the badge of one of the most successful of modern institutions, the Boy Scouts, and we do not by any means consider this as the mere working of chance. It is believed that this symbol represented the plan of the lost city of Atlantis and also of Solomon's temple, built to withstand any wind that might blow; for which reason it is a valued talisman amongst Freemasons. The various meanings and uses of this fascinating symbol have been dealt with at some length in our book on Talismans and Amulets,* so that it is unnecessary to say more here.

Another glyph of the Sun of great antiquity is the dot surrounded by a circle, well known to astrologers, worn to attract success, health and longevity, which is the gift of the Sun; no better symbol could have been selected as the distinguishing mark of our aeroplanes in the terrible War now raging, as an indication of our national ideals, and whether its choice was deliberate or otherwise it most certainly expresses the aim of the Allies to establish a new world of freedom and justice, with reasonable opportunities of health and successful development for all nations.

As the Sun is the greatest manifestation by day, so the calm radiance of the Moon rules the night, and through all time her beauty and dignity has been felt to be a visible continuation of the forces emanating from the Sun, and numerous symbols have been used to attract her help and

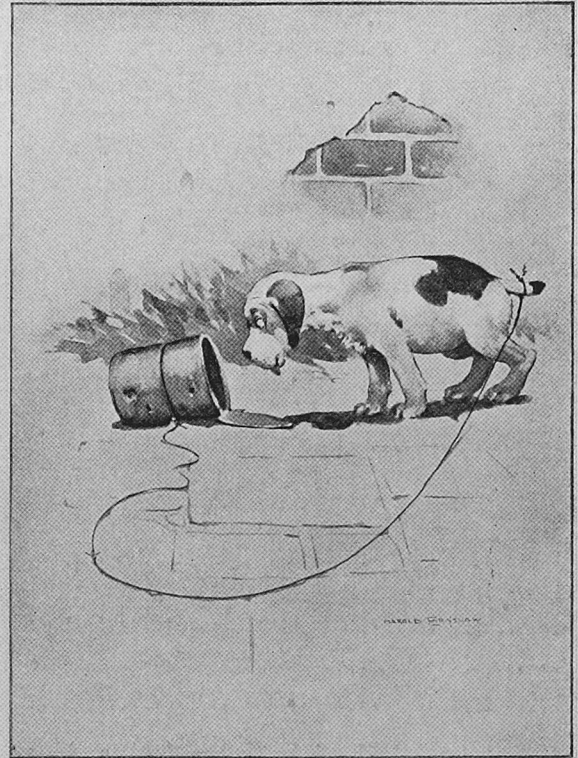
* *The Book of Talismans, Amulets and Zodiacal Gems.*
By W. T. & K. Pavitt. London: W. Rider & Son, Ltd.

UNRECORDED POSTSCRIPTS.

DRAWN BY HAROLD FAENSHAW



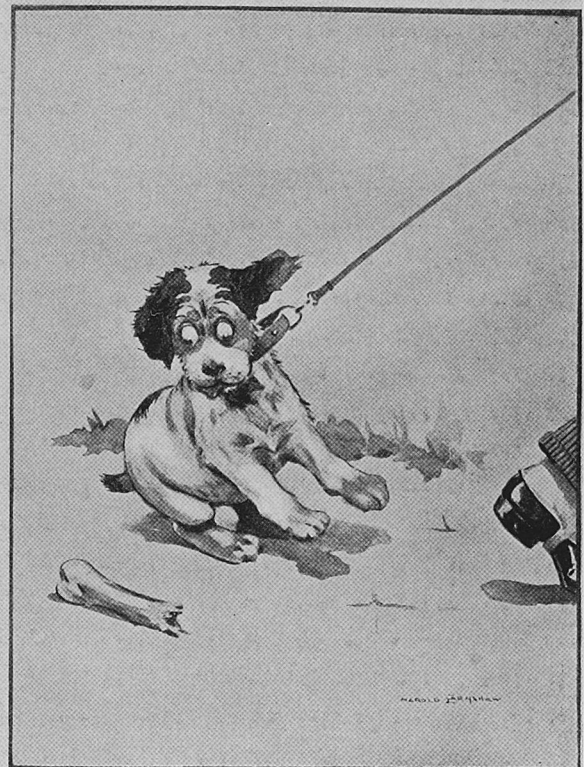
"I SHOULD LIKE TO KNOW HOW."



"I AM LOOKING INTO THE MATTER."



"I SHALL BE LOOKING OUT FOR YOU."



"I WISH I COULD STAY HERE LONGER."

benefits; the Sun being held to typify the All-Father, the Moon naturally became feminine, and her favours as necessary to the welfare of mankind as those of the Sun; her crescent symbol always representing the universal celestial Mother Isis, Diana and the Madonna, symbolizing the highest womanly virtues. In due course she became the horned Moon, and so horns of animals worn upon the head were used as the badge of the Moon-goddess, the most compassionate and beneficent of female beings; frequently the horn was taken to symbolize divinity, and when shown on male personages refers to the Supreme God, for which reason Moses is represented with horns on his head when returning with the tables of the commandments from the divine presence. In Italy they are still used to this day and may be seen over doors, and upon buildings to protect the inhabitants from bewitchment and the Evil Eye.

The horseshoe nailed over our own doors had its origin in this same crescent symbol, though owing to lack of knowledge of this it is frequently seen with the horns pointing downwards, which being reversed in this way loses its significance and the luck is said to run out.

In many religions of ancient days the Sun stood as the symbol of the Supreme Being, the life-giving central power, and in his lecture on heat Professor Tyndall says:

Every mechanical action on the surface of the earth, every manifestation of power, organic or inorganic, vital and physical, is produced by the Sun, which is the reservoir of the electrical magnetic and vital forces required by our system, which are taken in by all men, animals, vegetables and minerals and by them transmuted into the various life forces.

This electric force or energy is coloured, so to speak, by the portion of the Zodiac it passes through in reaching the earth, so

that the twelve months of the year represent twelve coloured rays of magnetism, and those born during one period of the year will be in sympathy with those born at other periods, whose rays are harmonious with their own. Many astrologers believe that the planets of our solar system not only absorb and give out the sun's rays, but add a subtle force peculiarly their own, which they reflect to the earth, thus exercising their allotted part in the evolution of mankind, and talismans made when harmonious aspects are in force of the metal and stone represented by the planet most favourably aspected in the horoscope, form a channel through which these vibrations are transmitted to the wearer of the talisman. The horoscope is necessary for an accurate decision as to the most suitable planetary influence to be represented, for if the sign occupied by the Sun was afflicted at the time of birth this sign should not be engraved on a charm or talisman. Egypt is particularly rich in examples of amulets and charms, their examination revealing to the seeker (who recognizes the fact that symbols, whether in the form of animals or inanimate objects, were regarded as a manifestation of the Divine power exerting itself under various aspects) a depth of refinement and poetry that will more than repay him, a talisman being an ideal made for the guidance of faith, and a mental concept of an inspiring character.

The dog-headed ape is always associated with the great god Thoth, weighing the souls of the dead at the judgment day, and seven of these animals were said to represent the spirits of the dawn, which after chanting the morning hymn to the Sun assumed the form of apes.

The sacred scarab is one of the best known Egyptian talismans, dedicated to Khepera, a form of the Sun-god; Pliny describes it as illustrating the revolution of

the Sun, from its habit of making pellets of clay and rolling them along before it. It was used as a symbol of immortality and as a hieroglyph signifies creative power, and was by royal command engraved upon the signets of Egyptian soldiers to confer virility and manly force and bring them success and victory on their expeditions. Next in importance to the scarab, the most popular Egyptian talisman was the eye of Osiris, worn by the living for courage, and used to protect the dead from evil magic. It is natural that from the idea of sympathetic magic representations of the eye itself should among all people be considered as a potent agent in warding off the evil glance, and for this purpose it is very popular amongst the Turks, Arabs and Nubians of to-day.

Another well-known talisman is the ankh or "key of life," which some astrologers assert was founded on the symbol of Venus, used by the Egyptians to form their word *ankh*, meaning life. The circle signifies the Divine spirit, and the cross matter, the symbol thus showing the ultimate conquest of matter by spirit.

A talisman consisting of the first two fingers was considered a symbol of strength and power, and a sign of peace and good faith, the first finger being the indicator of Divine will and justice, and the only one that can stand erect by itself alone; the second representing the Holy Spirit the Mediator.

The hippopotamus was regarded as a powerful amulet for protection against evil magic, being dedicated to Hathor, a very popular form of the goddess Isis in her rôle of the loving protecting mother of the living and the guardian of their souls when in the underworld.

In the Middle Ages the cock as a symbol was in great favour, being considered the special enemy of the devil; hence he is

placed upon weather vanes of churches and other buildings, so that the arch-fiend may always see his dreaded foe on guard.

The oldest form of the cross, the tau is supposed to have had its origin from the divisional markings on the back of the sacred beetle or scarab, and is frequently found on talismanic rings of the thirteenth century and this is also the cross marked on the forehead of the faithful children of Israel mentioned in the ninth chapter of Ezekiel. A cross generally of Greek form enclosed in a circle is another Sun symbol, and made in brass is one of the commonest ornaments used on the harness of cart-horses in England and all over Europe, and was originally designed as a protection from witchcraft and fascination.

The fish appears in every known religion as a symbol of creative power, fertility and plenty, in primordial philosophies playing an important part in creation; and because life was believed to have entered the world through the mouth of the fish, the mystical emblem known as the Vesica piscis assumed its shape, an oval like that of a fish's mouth.

Although the black cat is considered unlucky in China, the reverse idea was held by the Egyptians, who preserved them extensively, keeping special temples in their honour, and dedicating them to Isis, whose favours they were believed to attract. The cat was considered an appropriate symbol of the Moon (Isis), first because she prowls by night, secondly by her varied colours, and thirdly because of her fertility. Also the pupils of the eyes of the cat appear broad and full at the full moon, contracting and weakening at its decrease.

From the earliest ages men have regarded the hand as a natural symbol of a Higher Power and Perfected Intelligence, and although it may have been used at times as an instrument of evil, by the malignant and cruel, more frequently it has

been taken as a powerful protection against that special form of evil, supposed to be flashed from one person to another by the eye. Some of the oldest and most interesting examples of the use of the hand as an amulet of protection and power have been taken from early Etruscan tombs; others are described as belonging to the first Iron Age, a period of extreme antiquity, and one piece of bronze plate cut into a rough representation of the hand with an eyelet for suspension round the neck, shows that these amulets were worn as far back as 500 to 1000 B. C. A form of great antiquity and valued by all Moslems is the hand of Fatima, which is typified by a hand with fingers and thumb outstretched, and is considered to bring the favour and protection of the prophet Mohammed, who is represented by the thumb; the lady Fatima, his only daughter, by the first finger; Ali, her husband, by the second; the third and fourth fingers being allotted to Hassan and Hussain, the sons of Fatima and Ali.

Amulets were frequently written on parchment, and one universally worn by Jews over thirteen years of age in the time of our Lord was called Tetragrammaton, consisting of four passages from the twelfth chapter of Exodus, second and tenth verses, the sixth of Deuteronomy, fourth and ninth verses, and the eleventh chapter of Deuteronomy, thirteenth and twenty-first verses. This form of amulet is very popular, inscriptions from the Koran being added amongst Arabs, Turks and Abyssinians of the present day, who do not confine them to their own persons, but also attach them to their camels and horses.

In January, 1915, "Eye Witness," in his dispatch from the front, speaking of written charms being found on German prisoners, quotes as follows:

Not a few of our prisoners are in possession of so-called written charms against death, wounds,

disease and every imaginable evil. One such document begins thus:

"May God preserve me against all manner of arms and weapons, shot and cannon, long or short swords, knives or daggers or carbines, halberds, and anything that cuts or points, against thrusts, rapiers, long and short rifles, or guns and such like, which have been forged since the birth of Christ; against all kinds of metal, be it iron or steel, brass or lead, ore or wood."

After further circumlocution the list goes on to include all kinds of evil reports, from a blow from behind, from witchcraft and well-stealing (poisoning), but curiously enough it omits the only mischance which actually befel the owner—that of being made a prisoner of war! * The document is of inordinate length, and ends with some Cabalistic letters and numerals, and with an obscure reference to a blessing from the Archangel Gabriel. Many of these amulets or charms are probably of very ancient origin and have been handed down among the German peasantry from generation to generation.

Varieties of these written charms are familiar to all students of the occult, and are to be met with in the various writings of Francis Barrett, A. E. Waite, Macgregor Mathers and many others, ranging from invocations for spiritual aid and protection, down to charms for material gain and prosperity, or against sickness and disease. Amulets and charms are not, however, always confined to inscriptions or invocations, but frequently consist of symbols having a religious origin, and examples are still in existence of these ancient beliefs bequeathed to us from China, Japan, India, Egypt, Assyria, Ancient Rome and Europe of the Middle Ages.

It is impossible in a short article to do full justice to this subject, but sufficient has been said to show that a careful examination of ancient talismans and charms will well repay the inquirer, as a little research will readily unearth a vast amount of information of absorbing interest.

* It is very doubtful if the German soldier in question would have regarded this as a mischance.—Ed.